

PSYCHIATRY-CRIMINOLOGY

Baby is a Criminal

You Must Start In the Nursery to Prevent Crime; Newspapers, Radio, Parents All Have Their Influence

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LET US get away from the idea that the criminal is a strange monster whose mind works in a perverted manner, whose moral sense is extinct and who is marked by physical signs of degeneration. The criminal is the same physically, and his psychological reactions are the same, as the non-criminal.

We all start out as criminals. Every baby is a perfect criminal. I mean by that that the baby is a supreme egoist. He recognizes only his own desires and everything else must be subordinate to them. He gives way to his own physical desires whenever he pleases. He demands warmth and food and comfort and howls until he gets them. To be sure his activities are limited by his physical feebleness, otherwise, he would rob and kill.

Reforming "Tough Babies"

As the baby grows older, he passes through a civilizing process in miniature. Those social ideals which it has taken humanity thousands of years to acquire are instilled into him by his family, his nurse, and later his teachers and all with whom he comes in contact. He learns that certain things are socially taboo, and that he must conform to certain requirements.

It is in this growth from babyhood to maturity that criminals are made, or socially useful citizens. As the child is taught to adjust to his family and later to his playmates and his teachers, so will he react to society in general when he grows up.

Psychological studies of some habitual criminals have revealed that their constant warring with society was in reality a symbol of the hate they once felt for a harsh father or an older brother.

But there is another way in which criminals are formed. To understand it I want to speak for a moment of a modern psychological conception called the super-ego. Put in simple terms, this means a group of ideals built up by the individual as a pattern toward which he shapes himself. These ideals he gets

from various sources, perhaps some from the Bible, from conversations with his father and mother, from books he has read telling of the deeds of heroes, or from radio talks.

As a small boy, the super-ego is naturally somewhat crude and childish in its scope. The boy wants to do something big and brave and be cheered by the crowds, to be a prize-fighter, or a ball player, to save someone from a burning house, or win a race for his school. As he grows older, his ideals become more constructive and socially useful. He wishes to be a good citizen, to serve his country in some way, to discover something useful in science, or to found a business.

This is the usual course in the average boy reared in the normal American family. But think of the boy reared in the slums who has been subjected to none of these influences. As a little boy he is familiar with vice and cruelty. The hero of his neighborhood is the bully who is leader of a gang—a Micky Maguire—who steals from vegetable carts and thumbs his nose at policemen. As he grows older he joins a gang and sees with awe and respect real gangsters who have served prison terms, who carry guns, and some of whom have even killed. These are his heroes; and even above them—in his estimation—are the ward bosses, the crooked politicians, gang leaders and racketeers.

Worshipping False Images

Is it small wonder that his super-ego is built up of material far different from that of the other boy? It is inevitable that he becomes a criminal. He is, in fact, what one might term a normal criminal.

Make what fun you will of Sandford and Merton, Little Elsie, David Copperfield, and all the other prigs and priggesses of the Victorian Era, nevertheless they offered a not unadmirable ideal for the growing mind. And the Frank Merriwells and Nick Carters were not so bad, either. After all, they represented the age-long conflict between good and evil and in the last analysis they were on the side of the angels.

It all depends on what ideals are held up from earliest childhood to the growing child. In the proper, well-regulated family we have the ideal which is in conformity with social ideals; in the crowded slums we have the ward heeler, the gang-leader, the racketeer, as local heroes.

There is no criminal type. In the past, scientists have pursued this chimerica. It is a very human quest. For it is very human to wish for the concrete solution to all human problems—the ancient alchemists sought for the reagent that would transmute base metals to gold, the chemists have sought for the universal solvent, the philosopher for the secret of happiness, the physiologists for the secret of life, it has been everywhere a very human failing to long for something definite and final in a world of uncertainty and speculation.

Whited Sepulchres of Crime

So it would be gratifying indeed if we could get out our little tape-measure and our calipers and our psychological tests and apply them and say, "Well, here is a robber, and here a murderer, and here a forger." But, believe it or not, human reactions cannot be measured in any such exact manner. The human being, faced with temptation, or goaded by necessity or greed, will behave in an exactly predetermined manner. But what that manner is, no one knows but one who has followed his reaction from the cradle on.

Who is the true criminal? Not the thoughtless youth who, on his way home from a party, steps the car up to 40 when the speed limit is 25, not the man who takes a drink after 2 A. M., or the underprivileged moron who grabs a pocket-book and runs; no, none of these. It is the man who betrays his trust. It is the man who knowingly, day after day and month after month, plays with the security and happiness of others. It is the man who blithely contracts debts he knows down in his heart he cannot pay, it is the lawyer who foments litigation, the doctor who advises unnecessary operations and profits by them on account of arrangements, pecuniary or otherwise, with surgeons, it is the bank official who lives for years beyond his income knowing that he has always the resources of other peoples' income, it is the public official who lends

his name and prestige to enterprises he knows to be fundamentally unsound—these are the real criminals. They are the people who really know better. The lawyer who lends his legal skill to releasing a criminal, the venal judge, the complaisant warden who gives favor to the convict with money or influence, the parole board official who is influenced by the pressure of this or that one can be added to the "true" criminal category.

All Potential Criminals

All of us, it must be remembered, have criminal tendencies, more or less well covered by the veneer of civilization or expressed in a way that is socially useful or comparatively harmless. We all have a certain delight in strife, in cruelty and bloodshed. This can be expressed vicariously in watching prize-fights, or wrestling matches, in some nations in bull-fights, and every now and then the desire to slay and to inflict suffering can be indulged in wholesale when there is a war.

I am sometimes asked, by the way, are not all criminals abnormal? The answer to this is no. I have found, in my studies, that criminals fall into five main classes:

1. The statutory criminal.
2. The accidental criminal.
3. The neurotic criminal.
4. The normal criminal.
5. The psychotic criminal.

Murderers are Nice People

The statutory criminal is the product of the law. With legislatures working night and day turning out laws it is almost impossible for the most well-meaning citizen not to break one occasionally. At times laws are enacted which are so contrary to the general feeling and desire of the people that they are violated wholesale and eventually either become a dead letter or are repealed—the Prohibition law, for example. Such statutes do not represent any moral law and their violators are statutory criminals. You or I, or our neighbors, might find ourselves in this group at any time.

Then there is the accidental criminal, the man who commits the so-called crime of passion, or who steals money entrusted to him under the pressure of great need.

Most murders, it may be said, are committed without any real premeditation. No one is more surprised, as a rule, after a murder, to see the victim lying at his feet, than the murderer himself. I have known several hundred



"MUSCLING IN"

Children are apt to go after what they want, by direct and violent methods. Most of us "learn better" as we grow older. Those who preserve this childish tendency into adult life are likely to be classed as criminals.

murderers very well in my time and most of them have been the nicest, pleasantest chaps you can imagine.

When showing a visitor about the criminal insane department of which I am head, I sometimes ask him to pick out three or four inmates who he thinks might be murderers. He invariably selects a few rather coarse, rather unintelligent looking, but comparatively harmless persons. He doesn't suspect that the mild little man who retreated to his room when visitors were announced, the somewhat effeminate chap who was crocheting a belt or the polite young fellow who opened the door for him and helped him on with his overcoat, were all murderers.

Crime as Social Revenge

Also with us is the neurotic criminal; that is, the person whose offenses against society represent an emotional conflict within himself. In this group belong those individuals who seem to have an inevitable impulse to steal, even though they are rich, or set fires, the kleptomaniacs and the pyromaniacs. In such cases the abnormal quality of the crime is obvious.

Then again it is found sometimes that a habitual thief is such because of some old family difficulty. He has been, we will say, mistreated by an alcoholic father, or has been sent to reform school and treated so severely that upon dis-

charge he has conceived a bitter hatred for society. To him courts, judges, policemen represent fathers, teachers, tyrants, and every successful felony he commits is a triumph over his natural enemies.

In the fourth classification is the normal criminal; that is, the type whose whole training from early childhood has been in defiance of law, disregard of property, and admiration of the successful criminal.

Psychotics Easily Detected

The fifth group is the psychotic criminal, or the one who is so on account of actual mental disease. They are a small group and can usually be quickly recognized by the psychiatrist. Certain types of offenses, in fact, should by their nature give rise to the suspicion of mental illness. Thus when a 60 or 70 year old respectable business or professional man is suddenly arrested for a sexual offense, we suspect he is beginning to suffer from one of those mental diseases that afflict the aged. When a person is killed and the body horribly mutilated we suspect that the murderer might have been an epileptic.

Checking crime needs to proceed along two lines, preventing it in the first place, and second, helping the criminal become a useful citizen.

The criminal is made in his formative years, when he is being subjected to

deleterious influences in the slums of great cities, or when he is getting into difficulties at home and at school and becoming a problem child. These problem children are receiving more and more attention every year—not only they, but their parents; for a problem child usually means a problem parent.

So we have parent-teachers associations, child-guidance clinics, juvenile courts and other agencies which are doing more and more effective work. We have mental hygiene clinics for poorly-adjusted adults who learn to recognize and handle their own difficulties and are thus enabled to handle their children better. The schools have psychologists and specially trained workers who take in hand children who are beginning to be at odds with society and help them over the rough spots.

Social Sanitation Needed

The ultimate reclamation of the social group who grow up idealizing crime and criminals is, of course, a Gargantuan task, involving as it does the cleaning up of the slums, the ridding cities of graft and gangsters, and so on. It is a social problem whose solution is in the distant future.

In the meantime, a certain amount of education can be done by newspapers, movies, radio programs, and by parents and others in refraining from glorifying crime in any manner.

I have often been asked whether or not I think that exciting radio programs, especially of the serial variety, dealing with crooks, with super-criminals, and with exciting and impossible adventures are harmful to children.

That is a question which cannot be answered categorically. It all depends on the child. Most children nowadays take such things as a matter of course and if their hero is left at the end of the fifteen minute program apparently about to be destroyed in a particularly painful manner, do not worry about him unduly. As one of my own small boys said on such an occasion, "Oh well, his name is on the feature and they've got to rescue him so they can go on with it."

Of course, if a nervous child is obviously upset by exciting programs or begins to show too marked a preoccupation with crime or admiration of criminals the judicious parent will ban such programs in his own home.

Coming to deal with the actual person charged with crime of any serious or habitual nature, the first step is to give the offender a mental examination. This is required by law in Massachu-

setts and done very generally in New York, and Maryland. The offender who has actual mental trouble or who is feeble-minded is then weeded out and placed in an appropriate institution.

Next the prosecutor and the judge should have the advice of the psychiatrist as to the disposition of the case. In other words, the criminal should be treated and not the crime. The type of person committing the offense should be fully understood, the circumstances, the motive, and the chance of its repetition should be taken into account. It is obviously useless to lock up a person for a few months who has committed the same offense a dozen times before, even though it be a comparatively trivial one.

It may very well be that a murderer could be released after a short detention with perfect safety to himself and society and a man who stole a loaf of bread should remain confined for life.

Treatment of prisoners actually in penal institutions should be determined after a thorough psychiatric study, and indeed this is coming to be done more and more. Some types of criminals, the so-called "normal" criminal I have referred to above, will require a fairly strict, even hard-boiled method of treatment, the neurotic criminal will require special treatment in an effort to cure him, and the accidental criminal may be treated with a minimum of restraint.

Criminals are Human Beings

Much has been said in criticism of the parole system. In reality it is successful in a high percentage of cases, but it is the failures which receive publicity. Aside from the evils of political pressure, the chief fault with it is that it is often administered by unqualified persons. The public is slow to understand that good intentions are not everything. A man may be a successful merchant, a good father, stand high in the councils of his church and lodge and be intensely interested in public reforms, but nevertheless be totally unfit to sit on a parole board.

Work is constantly being done in studying the criminal mind and in trying to solve the problems of prevention and reclamation. At the Baker Foundation in Boston Dr. Healy is doing notable work and at the Institute for Juvenile Research in Chicago Dr. Schroeder, and there are other workers elsewhere.

In short, we are coming to realize that the criminal is not a strange, scarcely human animal, but a person very much like you and me, who thinks, eats, breathes, talks, loves, desires, and hates

just as we do. Looking upon such a one think of Kipling's lines:

"Stopped in the straight when the race was his own,
Look at him cutting it, cur to the bone;
Ask, ere the youngster be rated and chidden,
What did he carry and how was he ridden?
Maybe they used him too much at the start,
Maybe Fate's weight-cloths were breaking his heart."

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PALEOBOTANY

Minute Details of Fossils Revealed by New Method

SECRETS of the plant world which have been hidden from man for more than 200 million years may be revealed through a new microscopic technique with which scientists for the first time have been able to examine tiny fossilized cells under high magnification.

Developed by William C. Darrah, Harvard botany instructor, the improved technique enables investigators to peel a transparent cross-section less than one twenty-five-thousandth of an inch thick from a fossil embedded in solid rock. This peeling can be magnified approximately 500 times, so that study of complex cellular structures is easily possible.

Previous methods permit scientists to magnify clearly only to about 60 diameters. Fossil cross-sections are also considerably thicker and darker under older techniques of procuring them.

Armed with this new weapon, scientists are expected to be able to conduct research in fields which have heretofore been inaccessible. The discovery is expected to be of particular aid in a study of the plant life involved in the formation of petrified woods and anthracite coal.

Although botanists have never before been able to obtain satisfactory microscopic specimens from these hard rock types, Mr. Darrah has already made successful fossil peelings from both. Some of his specimens from an Illinois coal deposit have been found to contain the remains of pollen grains more than 200 million years old.

In making the cross-sections, the fossil area in the rock under examination is first polished with an abrasive wheel. The area is then treated with acid and coated with a special nitro-cellulose solution. When this has dried into a tough film, it is peeled from the specimen. On